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FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4191
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHTN/AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN IMMEDIATE 5530
RUEHDU/AMCONSUL DURBAN IMMEDIATE 9755
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 000820

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FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY JENDAYI FRAZER FROM AMBASSADOR BOST

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/17/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SF](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR REQUEST TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST ZIMBABWEAN
ARMS SHIPMENT

Classified By: Chief of Mission Eric M. Bost. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C) As you may be aware, there is currently a Chinese vessel outside the port of Durban carrying six containers of small arms ammunition, mortar ammunition, and mortar tubes. The containers are consigned to the Zimbabwean Air Force. I understand that technically the shipment is legal. According to a statement from SAG Spokesperson Themba Maseko today, the SAG will not interfere with the shipment, arguing that, "We are not in a position to act unilaterally and interfere in a trade deal between two countries." Our DATT also has reliable information that the SAG Conventional Arms Control Committee and Minister of Defense Lekota approved the importation, transport, and exportation of the arms on or about 14 April 2008.

12. (C) I believe that we need to speak out against the transportation of arms into Zimbabwe for three reasons. First, I would argue that this shipment should be halted temporarily on moral grounds since it is possible that these weapons may be misused against the Zimbabwean citizenry, especially the opposition. Second, I would argue for practical reasons that should ZANU-PF collapse, these weapons could find their way onto the regional market. Third, though we cannot legally stop the shipment, I believe that public statements on our part that express our concern about the potential use of these weapons may give the SAG pause.

13. (U) With these reasons in mind, I would like to make the following statement here in Pretoria.

BEGIN TEXT

"The US Government is aware that there is a shipment of weapons, including three million rounds of small arms ammunition, from China outside the port of Durban awaiting transit through South Africa to the Zimbabwean military. We understand that this shipment is technically legal. However, we urge the SAG and other governments in the region in the strongest possible terms to temporarily deny transit through their countries. We are arguing not on legal grounds, but on moral grounds. Given the current electoral crisis in Zimbabwe, coupled with the fact that security forces have already been deployed to abuse the citizens of Zimbabwe (especially opposition members), we fear that these bullets are more likely to be used against the Zimbabwean citizens than any outside threat. These weapons should not go to Zimbabwe until it is clear that they will not be used against the Zimbabwean citizenry. While the US has no direct influence over the technical or administrative process of the

transit, I fear these bullets could cause a tragedy in Zimbabwe. I would be remiss if I didn't take every opportunity to speak out to prevent it.

END TEXT

14. (U) I understand that this shipment could move imminently, perhaps even today. I urge the Department clearance of this language expeditiously.

BOST